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FRQ-2005B #4

2/27/13

Effects of Industrialization and Urbanization on the Working Class

Between 1750-1900 the working class was impacted greatly by industrialization and urbanization. After the Agriculture Revolution in England, the techniques for farming where improved by many innovations, such as McCormick’s Reaper .These innovations lead to the Industrial and Urbanization Revolution across Europe and a major shift in the living in working conditions and structures of the working class. During this time the quality of life of the working class decreased until the 1850s, when although it was not restored to its former pastoral quality, it was slightly improved.

The quality life of many working class people between 1750 and the early 1800s greatly decreased due to the Industrial Revolution. During the late 1750s, families that were involved in the putting-out system controlled the hours and conditions of their work. These working class families turned the materials that were provided to them by their employer into a product. Because they worked from their homes, in the countryside these people were able to regulate the hours and conditions of their labor. They had this good quality of life and work because they were not regulated by greedy factory owners, but by themselves. While working at home as a family unit, parents could discipline, teach, and interact with their children on a constant basis. This structure of working class families was quickly altered as their employment moved out of their homes and into factories around the 1800s. The family unit that dominated the life of the working class was replaced by fragmented families, employed in many different factories. During the beginning of this industrial period the employment of men was greater than that of women and children, but this soon changed when industrial machines needed small, quick fingers. Women and children were quickly employed, leaving many men unemployed. This rapid Industrialization disrupted families, and soon many men turned to alcohol, instead of seeking supplementary employment. In addition to changes in unemployment, and alcoholism in men, the education of many children began to diminish. Working in factories away from their parents, these children did not attend school and did not interact with their parents enough to be disciplined or educated. The morals and behaviors original taught to children by their parents was now instilled in them by the factories, with harsh forceful tactics. This shows how the rapid industrialization of the working class degraded the lives of families. In addition to the already excruciatingly long hours of labor done by many individuals of the working class, some factories changed the clocks. The clocks would say that worked started sooner and ended later than the real time, extending the already the work time spent in loud factories. In many other factories workers labored from five in the morning to eight or nine at night, with only two hour break, dispersed throughout the day. Some breaks were taken inside the cacophonous factory or at home. Often if a worker wished to eat a meal at home they would have to run there and back in order to make it back to the factory in time to begin work again. The physical and emotional heath of these families decreased because of these conditions. Due to these industrial working conditions the time families spent together was shortened and the families were unable to build stable relationships. Many women who worked in the factories hired wet nurses, to feed and nurture their new born babies because absence from work was not acceptable. Additionally in England, due to industrialization many children lived in orphanages and were employed to work in factories. This lack of sensitiveness to the basis of all family structure was caused by industrialization and employment in factories.

Progressively industrial conditions that affected the working class improved in the early 19th century. In 1833 the Factory Acts were passed in England, stating that only children above the age of nine could work in factories. These acts also made two hours of school mandatory for children and prohibited them from working in factories at night. Additionally children between nine and thirteen could not work more than nine hours a day and those between age thirteen and eighteen could work only three hours more than them. These acts allowed children to spend more time with their families, interacting and rebuilding the family unit that was so crudely broken during the start of the Industrial Revolution. They also allowed for children to receive an improved education by attending school on a more regular basis and learning from their parents during the extended free time they now possessed. Although it took time for the Factory Acts to have a real affect, they certainly improved the working condition in factories staffed with the working class. The conditions of workers were additionally improved by the formation of Trade Unions which allowed for working class members to cooperate with factory owners, in regulating the hours and conditions. Starting in the 1850s effective unions such as the London Trades Council and the Trade Union Council began to form in England and in 1867 the Royal Commission were formed. In England these unions were officially legalized in 1817. Because many working class families worked in factories their working conditions were improved through the many reforms that unions passed in England. With this progression of reforms during the industrial revolution, the employment of children was not necessary to support oneself in the industrial society. As a result the average size of working class families, that worked in factories shrunk, with the help of relatively advanced forms of birth control. These industrial changes in the previously destitute family arrangement lead to slight improvements in the quality of life for many working classmen.

Between 1750 and 1850 the lives of the working class were affected by urbanization that spread through Europe and England. Families that participated in farming and the putting-out system interacted on a constant basis because they produced goods from their homes. These families that lived in the countryside were at first not affected by the urbanization that grasped Europe and they were able to live in acceptable even pastoral conditions. Although in the 1750s the living conditions of many working class individuals changed due to the English Enclosure Acts, which were the re-diving of the countryside to enhance it productivity. These acts revolutionized the division of land in the countryside of Europe, by removing the working class communities that lived there and as a result these families were forced to move into cities. This urbanization not only relocated thousands members of the working class, but also disposed of the putting out system that the family unit was centered around. During this period of urbanization factories were built throughout Europe. The construction of these factories was limited due to the need for running water, such as a river, to power the machines. Due to the limited location of factories and consequently cities, these communities soon became over abundantly populated by the working class. All of the working class was greatly affected by this change. This rapid urbanization the cities around factories where struck with a degraded quality of sanitation. Families that lived together had scarce furniture and little space to move around. Their beds where made of straw and their houses usually consisted of one room. Those who lived in communal houses slept next to strangers, also on cloth covered, dieses infected straw. These already destitute houses where surrounded by pollution and human excrement. These factories released poisonous smoke that infiltrated the house that so closely surrounded it. Because the working class lived in these urban cities, they were affected by their bad conditions every day. Another effect of this urbanization was the movement of many young women into cities. They were influenced negatively by the ideas presented to them in the contaminated living conditions of cities during the 18th century and many these women soon became prostitutes. This degrading profession of women and low quality of life and work was due to these young girls residence in urban cites and the unsanitary conditions that surrounded them

The increasingly bad conditions of the working class that infiltrated cities were improved by urban developments in the late 1850 till the 1900s. These changes began with the ability for factories to power themselves by means other than water and thus be built in more places. The cities that soon followed had improved sanitation and living conditions. This was due to a public a greater alertness of the causes of poor health and sanitation among the working class, in addition to a proper supply of clean water into cities. The majority of the working class was affected by these changes because they lived in urban cities. In Paris urbanization took on a whole new meaning with the progress of Haussmanization. This was a process of instituting urban regulation complied by George Haussman in France. The reforms regulated the homes, street width, and sanitation. The changes in street width helped prevent the establishment of slums and improved sanitation enhanced the health of the working class in France. Throughout Europe these urban improvements also lead to the decrease in infant death rate along with the overall health of the working class. The ability for working classmen to afford nicer homes and healthier lives occurred because of a rise in wages, which enabled the working class to afford healthier lifestyles and enhanced living conditions, while living in the city. Because they lived in improved cities working class society could now afford to spend more time focusing on their personal pleasures and social structure. This new focus on society soon leads to the birth of socialism, the bail that all property should be publicly owned. These ideas formed because individuals saw the hardships that surrounded the living condition of many working classmen and they hope to improve them for all with these new principles. Because they lived in cities they understood the hardships the problems and how to fix them. Despite these improvements it took time for the changes in urbanization affect all members of the working class and there were still many impoverished neighborhoods in cities such as Manchester and London.